

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 26, 2025  
8:13 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Ted Eischeid  
Representative Jubilee Underwood  
Representative Bill Elam

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Maxine Dibert  
Representative Rebecca Schwanke

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S) : ALASKA'S PER PUPIL SPENDING IN CONTEXT

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

DAYNA DEFEO, Director  
Center for Alaska Education Policy Research  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the presentation titled "Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context"

MATTHEW BERMAN, Professor of Economics  
Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the presentation titled "Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context"

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:13:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:13 a.m. Representatives Eischeid, Underwood, Elam, Story, and Himschoot were present at the call to order. Representatives \* arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION(S): Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context**

[8:14:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the only order of business would be a presentation titled "Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context."

[8:15:44 AM](#)

DAYNA DEFEO, Director, Center for Alaska Education Policy Research, gave the presentation titled "Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context." She began on slide 2, which outlined the 5 questions that the presentation would aim to answer by its conclusion. She continued to slide 3, which listed three key findings of the Center for Alaska Education Policy's Research work on the current state of education funding in Alaska. She skipped to slide 5, which compared the per-pupil funding between Alaska and the United States national average per-pupil funding. She skipped to slide 7, which displayed a bar graph that compared Alaska's overall per-pupil funding in 2017, 2019, and 2022. She backtracked to slide 6, which displayed a map of Alaska's school districts that emphasized the differing cost of education throughout its different regions.

[8:24:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked how many schools are in each category mentioned during the presentation.

MS. DEFEO replied that she couldn't point to any specific numbers and deferred her answer to Matthew Berman.

[8:24:41 AM](#)

MATTHEW BERMAN, Professor of Economics, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Gave the presentation titled "Alaska's Per Pupil Spending in Context". He said that he does not have the numbers in front of him currently and would follow up later.

[8:24:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked what data was used to generate the foundation factor map that was displayed on slide 7.

MS. DEFEO answered that the numbers displayed on slide 7 were obtained using figures found by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) in 2024.

MR. BERMAN clarified that the numbers used from the ISER research were from 2004-2005 and emphasized that the cost of energy has gone up exponentially since 2005.

[8:28:44 AM](#)

MS. DEFEO resumed the presentation on slide 8, which emphasized the lower cost of education in the Anchorage School District (ASD) and continued to slides 9 and 10, which compared the ASD's per-pupil spending to the national average per-pupil spending. She moved to slide 11, which displayed a graph that highlighted Alaska's lower per-pupil spending when compared to the rest of the United States.

[8:31:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if the per-pupil spending figures being mentioned during the presentation included spending on student extracurricular activities.

MR. BERMAN confirmed that extracurricular activities funding is included in the total per-pupil allocation figures being mentioned throughout the presentation.

[8:33:35 AM](#)

MS. DEFEO resumed the presentation on slide 12, which posed the second of the five questions displayed on slide 2 and skipped to slide 14, which displayed a graph that compared the average & current spending per student in the top 20 states in the United States.

[8:35:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked where New York, Vermont, And Washington D.C. rank when compared to other states' per-pupil funding.

MS. DEFEO said that she doesn't know off the top of her head and clarified that the institute she works for is only looking at the amount of dollars going into a public education system, not also the outcomes.

MR. BERMAN added his understanding that the motivation of Representative Elam's question was to determine if there were better educational outcomes in the states that received more public education funding and pointed to a series of other factors that might influence both a student's success and the cost of public education in any given state.

[8:40:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT commented that most school districts in the contiguous U.S. are governed by a county system and said that over half of the schools within the public school system in Washington, D.C. are charter schools.

[8:41:40 AM](#)

MS. DEFEO resumed the presentation on slide 15, which posed the third of the five questions displayed on slide 2 and moved to slide 16, which displayed two pie charts that highlighted the difference in Alaska's public education funding portfolio between 2017 and 2023. She continued to slide 17, which posed the fourth of the five questions displayed on slide 2 and moved to slide 18, which displayed two pie charts that compared Alaska's public education funding with the United States average funding. She continued to slide 19, which compared Alaska's salaries and wages as are included in its per-pupil spending and compared that portion of the per-pupil spending to the United States average.

[8:46:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if salary schedules are accounted for on the graph displayed on slide 19.

MS. DEFEO replied that the salary and wage figures used on slide 19 are based off of an average teacher earnings figure.

MR. BERMAN added that the numbers used on slide 19 were obtained by a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey.

[8:49:20 AM](#)

MS. DEFEO resumed the presentation on slide 20, which emphasized the higher cost of benefits and healthcare that makes up a larger portion of per-pupil spending in Alaska compared to the national average. She moved to slide 21, which highlighted the higher cost of the operation and maintenance of school districts in Alaska when compared to the national average. She moved to slide 22, which posed the final of the five questions displayed on slide 2. She continued to slide 23, which compared the per-pupil spending in 2017 and 2022 to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). She moved to slide 24, which displayed a graph that highlighted the changes in per-pupil spending relative to inflation in a specific time period highlighted on the left of the graph. She concluded the presentation on slide 26, which highlighted that the per-pupil spending in Alaska has fallen since 2017. She emphasized that Alaska has higher operating costs and hires from a national market of teachers and therefore must keep its salaries competitive. She said "how much Alaska should be spending on its education is a matter of input and output".

[8:57:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked if the salary and wages figures displayed on slide 19 included the cost of administrative staff.

MS. DEFEO answered that the study used for the information on slide 19 did include a differentiation between the cost of instructional staff and administrative staff.

[8:59:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if the data used throughout the presentation was budgeted data or actually spent data.

MR. BERMAN answered that the data used was actual expenditures and said that he would follow up with more information later.

[9:01:04 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:01 a.m.